

Message Text

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ACTION ACDA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 EUR-12 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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SAM-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 TRSE-00 DODE-00 NSC-05

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ERDA GERMANTOWN

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SUBJ: NPT REVCON: US REMARKS ON REGIONAL FUEL CENTERS

1. TEXT OF REMARKS MADE BY USDEL IN COMMITTEE II ON CAPTIONED SUBJECT, FOLLOWS. EARLIER PORTION OF SPEECH REFERRED TO EFFORTS TO MEET GROWING INTEREST OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS.
BEGIN TEXT.

AT A LATER STAGE, FURTHER DECISIONS WILL BE REQUIRED CONCERNING STORAGE OR REPROCESSING OF IRRADIATED FUEL DISCHARGED BY THE PLANT DURING ITS OPERATION, AND IT IS WITH THE NEED FOR SUCH FUTURE DECISIONS THAT THE IAEA HAS UNDERTAKEN STUDIES OF POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES FOR CHEMICAL REPROCESSING, COMPARING, FOR EXAMPLE, THE ECONOMICS OF A NUMBER OF SMALL REPROCESSING PLANTS, LOCATED IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, WITH A SINGLE LARGE PLANT TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF COUNTRIES IN PARTICULAR GEOGRAPHIC AREAS. TWO SIGNIFICANT FACTS HAVE EMERGED FROM THE PRELIMINARY IAEA STUDIES: FIRST, LARGE PLANTS ARE ADVANTAGEOUS IN MANY RESPECTS, AMONG WHICH ARE UNCLASSIFIED

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THE SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS POSSIBLE IN THE COST OF REPROCESSING,

EVEN TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE COST OF TRANSPORTING THE IRRADIATED FUEL AND, SECOND, THE ECONOMICS OF REPROCESSING, EVEN IN AN OPTIMUM-SIZE LARGE REGIONAL PLANT, DEPENDS PRIMARILY UPON THE VALUE ATTACHED TO PLUTONIUM AS A POWER REACTOR FUEL.

THIS SECOND QUESTION IS A VERY COMPLEX ONE AT THIS STAGE AND MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT THE PLUTONIUM SEPARATED IN A REPROCESSING PLANT MUST BE FABRICATED IN A PLANT ESPECIALLY DESIGNED, WITH REMOTE HANDLING EQUIPMENT, TO HANDLE THAT TOXIC MATERIAL. SUCH FABRICATION PLANTS ARE CONSIDERABLY MORE COMPLEX AND EXPENSIVE THAN PLANTS CURRENTLY IN OPERATION FOR THE FABRICATION OF NATURAL AND SLIGHTLY ENRICHED URANIUM. IN THE U.S., FOR EXAMPLE, THE QUESTION OF RECYCLING OF PLUTONIUM OR FUEL FOR THE CURRENT GENERATION OF THERMAL REACTORS ON A COMMERCIAL SCALE REMAINS AN OPEN ONE AT THIS TIME. IT IS THEREFORE ALSO APPROPRIATE TO EXAMINE THE OPTION OF EXTENDED STORAGE OF SPENT FUEL.

THE SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO THE FIRST PRELIMINARY RESULT OF THE IAEA STUDY IS MORE CLEAR, AND IS CORROBORATED BY A PRELIMINARY INDEPENDENT STUDY DONE BY MY GOVERNMENT. BUT THIS SUBJECT NEEDS ADDITIONAL DETAILED EXAMINATION. AT PRESENT, THE URGENT NEED IN THESE STUDIES IS ECONOMIC DATA CONCERNING THE CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF THE RELEVANT INDUSTRIAL INSTALLATIONS, SUCH AS CHEMICAL REPROCESSING PLANTS AND RADIOACTIVE WASTE HANDLING FACILITIES. ALL COUNTRIES HAVING SUCH INFORMATION SHOULD MAKE IT AVAILABLE TO THE IAEA, IN ORDER FOR ITS WORK TO PROCEED EXPEDITIOUSLY.

WHILE DEFINITIVE CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE ECONOMICS OF REPROCESSING IN GENERAL, AND THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF LARGE REGIONAL PLANTS IN PARTICULAR, MUST AWAIT THE RESULTS OF THOSE STUDIES, CERTAIN ADVANTAGES OF SUCH REGIONAL PLANTS ARE EVIDENT, AS I NOTED AT THE OUTSET. CLEARLY, THE PROBLEM OF HANDLING RADIOACTIVE WASTE IS SIMPLIFIED IF ONLY ONE SITE NEED BE UTILIZED, RATHER THAN MANY SITES. THE SAME IS TRUE OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY, SAFEGUARDING AND PHYSICAL PROTECTION, PARTICULARLY IF A PLANT FOR THE FABRICATION OF PLUTONIUM FUEL IS PLACED AT THE SAME LOCATION. MOREOVER, THE CAPITAL INVESTMENT REQUIRED FOR SUCH A CENTER, HAVING A LARGE CAPACITY, IS QUITE LIKELY TO BE LESS THAN THAT REQUIRED FOR A NUMBER OF SMALLER PLANTS, IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES, TOTALLING THE SAME CAPACITY.

MR. CHAIRMAN, I HOPE THAT THIS BRIEF PRESENTATION HAS INDICATED THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO THE PROMPT PURSUIT OF THE STUDY OF UNCLASSIFIED

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THIS PROBLEM BY THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY.

WE BELIEVE THE INFORMAL PAPER ON THIS SUGGESTION SUBMITTED BY THE HUNGARIAN DELEGATION, SHOULD BE REVISED TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- A RECOGNITION THAT REGIONAL OR MULTINATIONAL FUEL CYCLE CENTERS MAY BE A HIGHLY ADVANTAGEOUS WAY TO SATISFY, SAFELY AND ECONOMICALLY, THE NEEDS OF MANY COUNTRIES IN THE COURSE OF INITIATING OR EXPANDING NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAMS,

-- A RECOMMENDATION THAT THE IAEA CONTINUE AS EXPEDITIOUSLY AS POSSIBLE ITS STUDIES IN THIS AREA,

-- AN URGENT PLEA TO ALL NPT PARTIES TO COOPERATE IN THESE STUDIES, PARTICULARLY BY PROVIDING TO THE IAEA RELEVANT ECONOMIC DATA CONCERNING CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF FACILITIES SUCH AS CHEMICAL REPROCESSING PLANTS, WASTE HANDLING INSTALLATIONS, AND LONGER TERM SPENT FUEL STORAGE, AND

-- AN EARNEST HOPE THAT IF, ON THE BASIS OF POSITIVE FINDING OF THOSE STUDIES, REGIONAL OR MULTINATIONAL FUEL CYCLE CENTERS ARE UNDERTAKEN WITH PARTICIPATION BY NNWS'S PARTY TO THE NPT, ALL PARTIES TO THE TREATY IN A POSITION TO DO SO, WILL COOPERATE IN THE REALIZATION OF SUCH PROJECTS BY THE PROVISION OF TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.

MY DELEGATION IS CARRYING OUT INFORMAL CONSULTATIONS WITH A VIEW TO ADDING SUCH ITEMS TO THE DRAFT FINAL DECLARATION. END TEXT.
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